



# NEWS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



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## U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE EXTENDS BLACK BEAR DEADLINE; SEEKS FURTHER PUBLIC COMMENTS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has extended its deadline for listing the Louisiana black bear as a threatened species by 6 months in order to examine questions regarding the taxonomy of the subspecies. During the extension period, the Service is seeking additional public comment relative to taxonomy, status and threats to the bear.

The extension gives the Service an additional 6 months from the original deadline of June 21, 1991 to determine whether the species should be listed. By extending the period for consideration of a final decision, the Service hopes to clarify scientific issues related to the taxonomy, or biological identification and classification, of the Louisiana black bear.

If declared a threatened species, the Louisiana black bear would be granted official protection under the Endangered Species Act. The proposed listing is based primarily upon the loss of and continued threat to the species' habitat, according to Service officials.

The bear once occurred throughout southern Mississippi, all of Louisiana and eastern Texas, but suitable habitat has been reduced by more than 80 percent with encroaching civilization. Louisiana black bears are now found primarily in the Tensas and Atchafalaya River basins of Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi. The black bear is a large, black-haired mammal with a short tail, small eyes and a yellow-brown muzzle. Some adult males may weigh over 600 pounds.

The notice extending the deadline and calling for additional public comment will be published in the Federal Register on Friday, September 20. Comments should be submitted by November 20, 1991. To comment or to obtain additional information please contact the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Jackson, Mississippi 39213 or call (601) 965-4900.